

Sixth Annual Suicide Prevention Summit Highlights Men and Depression

By Kathleen Piché, LCSW, Public Affairs Director



To further local suicide prevention efforts, the Los Angeles County Suicide Prevention Network presented *Men and Suicide: Asking for Directions* on Thursday, September 8, 2016, at the California Endowment. The conference gathered experts in mental health and education as well as first-responders, advocates and survivors to address the alarming rate of suicide in the male population.

LACDMH Acting Director Robin Kay, Ph.D., and LACDMH Medical Director, Roderick Shaner, M.D, welcomed over 300 attendees welcomed the crowd with opening remarks.

"Suicide is one of the most tragic – and preventable – consequences of severe emotional distress and mental illness," Dr. Shaner stated. "This summit presents a remarkable opportunity to review and speed up the large-scale application of advances in suicide prevention to our community mental health system."

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The keynote address was given by Sally Spencer-Thomas, CEO and Co-Founder of the Carson J. Spencer Foundation. Sally is a Clinical Psychologist, mental health advocate, faculty member, consumer of mental health services and survivor of her brother's suicide. She has created a more accessible way for adult male populations to talk about, access and receive services through mantherapy.org as well as other unique outreach methods.

The morning also featured a multi-cultural panel that discussed issues in Asian Pacific Islander, Native American, African-American, Latino and Middle Eastern communities.

Five afternoon breakout sessions were offered, focusing on Law Enforcement, Veterans, LGBTQ, TAY and high-risk professions.



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Funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA, Proposition 63), the Suicide Prevention Summit brought together many well-known experts from mental health, public health, education, police and fire as well as advocates, providers, researchers and survivors to collaborate and chart a comprehensive strategy for suicide prevention.

More Los Angeles County residents die by suicide than from homicides, car crashes, or unintentional drug overdoses, according to newly published data from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health). LACDMH encourages the public to learn more about suicide risk factors during Suicide Prevention Month.

While Los Angeles County's rate of suicide is lower than state and national averages, there are still roughly two suicides daily. Suicide rates among males are 3.5 times higher than women, although more women than men are treated or hospitalized after a suicide attempt, according to the latest data from 2013.



“Suicide and suicide attempts continue to be a leading cause of injury and premature death in Los Angeles County, however it does not have to be this way,” said Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, Los Angeles County Interim Health Officer. “During Suicide Prevention Month, Public Health encourages everyone to educate and inform themselves about the warning signs of suicide and what they can do to help someone who may be at risk.”

“Depression, trauma, grief and loss, and substance use are some of the risk factors associated with suicide. The stigma around seeking help is very real, but talking about suicide actually opens up avenues for help and support,” said Carlotta Childs-Seagle, Deputy Director, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.

LACDMH is part of the countywide, multi-agency Partners in Suicide Prevention (PSP) Network that includes the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Didi Hirsch

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Mental Health Services, the Trevor Project, Teen Line, Know the Signs, Each Mind Matters, Outside the Wire, US VETS, The Soldiers Project, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and The Center for Wellness & Wellbeing. The mission of the PSP Network is to promote public and professional awareness, education, training and engagement regarding suicide and suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention in Los Angeles County.



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